CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF CORRUPTION: THE MISCONCEIVED VALUES PERSPECTIVE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study illustrated how the misconceived values of the citizens of a country are susceptible to predispose them to corrupt practices tendency using a conceptual model. The model is a four-square schema that divides countries of the world into four zones (A, B, C and D) with the Weberian ethical standard (acceptable societal values) and patron and client ethical standard (misconceived values) operating in opposite directions; and the public interest and private network interest operating opposite one another as well. It focused on the relationship between social norms, misconceived values and state institutions concerning corrupt practices incidence. Based on differences in the quality of citizens of the various zones in terms of understanding and internalization of the Weberian ethical standard (acceptable societal values), civic competencies acquired through education, public interest-driven mindset and the measures of social sanctions employed by states corruption level differs from zone to zone. It is small in zone A, big in zone B, becomes bigger in zone C and expands and becomes biggest in zone D. Nigeria was located in zone D because of the enormity and prevalence of misconceived values that increased private network interest mindset among citizens. The paper recommended among others that if the country has to move from zone D to A, corruption control must be carried out without regard to whose ox is gored in how it is prosecuted. Also, social values and institutions that work as enabling environments for corruption to strive have to be transformed, and the school curriculum should be overhauled to improve the civic competencies of citizens.

Introduction

The issue of corruption in human society is as old as man. Its prevalence, dynamics and impact vary from one to another and from one region of the world to another. The fact that corruption has long been with us as human beings is no justification enough for tolerating it in any society. No society has completely been able to eradicate it and every society is still grappling with how best to resolve its problems of corruption. Nigeria as a nation is also having its fair share of this problem.

So, ''the issue that corruption is endemic in Nigeria is not in doubt'' (Martini 2014), this is well documented in the available literature, print and electronic media. Martini (2014) notes that "Nigeria is included in the main international corruption assessments, including the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WBWGI), Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (TICPI) and

Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), as well as World Bank Business Surveys (WBBS)'' (para.5). In all of these, Nigeria has always been ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Also, the various manifestations of corruption in Nigeria are well documented in the numerous reports of commissions of enquiry (The Forster-Sulton Tribunal-1956, The Justice Coker Commission-1962, Pius Okigbo Report, Christopher Kolade Panel, etc.) established by successive administrations (Enweremadu 2004) as attestations to the evidence which space will not permit to report here.

The spate and level of corruption in Nigeria as pointed out above, and more importantly the negative impact and untold hardship corruption has had on Nigerians as a people and as a nation make one begin to worry whether Nigeria is making any progress in terms of corruption control. Corruption now features in all facets of national life in Nigeria. It has become a recurring decimal on both local and national news. It has damaged the image of Nigeria and its citizens. It has reduced the country in terms of social, political and economic development. To many, the country is best described as a failed state, where things hardly work (Iyoha 2005 in Aimiyekagbon 2018). Corruption has been embedded in many Nigerians corrupt practices, making it difficult for them to live honest and decent lives. In the words of Oyewale (2011) "in the present Nigerian situation, it appears that the cultural values transmitted to the society are the culture of violence, corruption, immorality, dishonesty and conflicts. These are certainly not worthwhile values that can move any nation forward".

Conceptual clarification

Here attention is focused on clarifying concepts central to the understanding of the study.

Corruption

The concept, corruption has been defined in various ways. Commonly, it is defined as the abuse of public office for the sake of private gain; the flouting of laid down rules and regulations for the sake of personal benefits. Corruption has also been defined as an anti-social behaviour conferring wrong benefits which are against legal and moral norms (Edame 2001 in Feyisola 2013). Ayobami (2012) on his part defined corruption "as the abuse or misuse of power or position of trust for personal or group benefit-monetary or otherwise" (p.6). The famous international organization on issues of public corruption, Transparency International (2002), sees corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for private gain. The World Bank and its agencies International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a similar way, describe corruption as the abuse of public office by persons or groups of persons for private gain. In this study, corruption is seen as dishonest, dubious and fraudulent conduct by those discharging public duties.

Corruption and corruption perception can be considered as socio-cultural issues (Mielgar, Tossi & Smith 2009) because they depend on how society understands the norms that govern it and how deviations from those norms are interpreted and erring members sanctioned. Indeed, it does not depend on the understanding and internalization of societal norms and values alone but also on personal values, how they are formed; and how right and wrong issues are identified and the situations in which they are to be internalized or rejected in society. The norms of societies are to
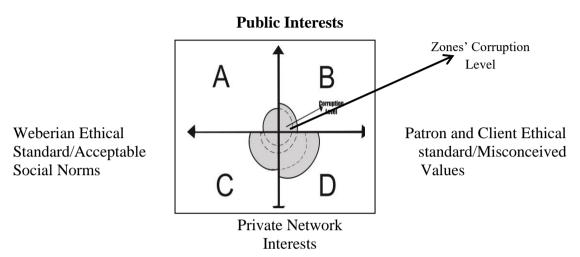
ensure people behave following certain expectations defined by the societal accumulated experience of what is considered as virtues. Non-conformity to these norms, virtues or values constitutes a deviation and a major root cause of corruption in all societies. As such, what you find in Nigeria these days, is the practice of receiving and giving gratifications or inducements, use of one's office for fraudulent material acquisition, misappropriation and diversion of public funds, abuse of public office and public confidence, examination malpractice, preferential treatment, sexual harassment, lawlessness, bending of rules, the pervasion of justice, portraying oneself as above the law, cutting corners in business, encouraging crime/ applauding criminals, promoting mediocrity at the expense of excellence, and luxury living that lures others to crime (Aimiyekagbon & Uzamere 2018).

Misconceived values

Values are the principles and standards of society. They are a society's judgment of what is desirable and important. They determine acceptable social behaviour (African Leadership Forum 1993). ''Values are human preferences, likes, and desires'' (Okwilague 2013 in Odia 2014). Corruption as a concept is a value. It is the relapse of moral values that have survived previous generations and societies in the distribution of resources and maintenance of social order. This relapse has created a lacuna and a shift in Nigerian values. As such, societal values have degenerated and decayed beyond measure and imagination. Values have been misconceived and become the norm in society. Misconceived values are predominant social values that hitherto were the opposite of societally acceptable values but now seem to be more expressed by the majority or are fast replacing the cherished values of the society. These new sets of values that emerged tend to have enthroned corrupt practices in all facets of national life in Nigeria. Most of the institutions and agents of socialization in the country have been adversely affected by the negative impact of these misconceived values that have become predominant in the society (Aimiyekagbon 2018). Values such as personalization of public offices; tolerance for culture of impunity; craze for materialism; glorification and approbation of criminals; hunger for a shortcut to affluence; certification syndrome; culture of consumerism and so forth seem to have become the norms of Nigerian society. These values mean the zeal to get everything whether our means can achieve them or not, getting what we want quickly without going through the normal course, being celebrated as financially successful when one cannot explain the source. The values also include living flamboyant and conspicuous lifestyles without any industrial venturing, gaining access to a high cadre public office seen as the opportunity to amass wealth for oneself, bending rules in office to benefit oneself and close associate seen as normal. The major thrust of this paper is not to look at how people steal or how much they have stolen neither is it to find out who the people stealing in Nigeria are. Rather, it is to illustrate using a conceptual model how certain societal practices/ predominant social values held by members of a society are responsible/ predispose them to corrupt practice tendencies.

The conceptual model

A foursquare schema model of corruption developed by Heilman and Ndumbaro (2002) to evaluate the impact of corruption on states institutions was adapted. The schema divides countries of the world into four zones and focuses on the relationship between social norms and state institutions concerning corruption incidence. The focus of this study however is on the relationship between social norms, misconceived values and state institutions about corrupt practices incidence.

Public Interests

A four-square schema classifying countries of the world into four zones adapted from Heilman and Ndumbaro, 2002

The Weberian ethical standard is the ideal and normal situation where the society's institutions run and operate following the laid down rules and regulations spelt out by Max Weber and others to guide the operations of bureaucracy. The rules and ethos of running an ideal bureaucracy include being run by officials whose jurisdictional areas and actions are ordered by law. There is a firm ordered hierarchy of power with its administration carried out based on written documents and a filing system. Others include appointment and advancement within the system based on professional criteria and authority of official impersonal and stem entirely from the post they hold not from personal status. In addition to the Weberian ethical standard, it is a situation where the social norms of society are highly known and internalized by citizens. The civic competencies of citizens are developed through education rather than coercion, punishment or other means. Citizens internalize societal values and apply them in their daily thoughts and actions. In this normal and ideal situation, public interest overrides private interest for good and patriotic citizens who are dominant in society. The common good supersedes every other private network and interest.

The patron and client ethical standards work in opposite directions of what the Weberian ethical standards stand for. The common good and public interest is not the priority. Here, those who are powerful and influential put their loyalist into positions or award them contracts undermining merit and due process. The aim is to ensure that they control the power and resources accruing to their offices. The patron and client ethical standards connote a situation where the values of the society have been wrongly conceived and the Weberian ethical standard that guides how society's institutions operate have been seriously mortgaged. In fact, it connotes the situation

where societal values have been misconceived. Values such as personalization of public offices; tolerance for culture of impunity; craze for materialism; glorification and approbation of criminals; hunger for a shortcut to affluence; certification syndrome; culture of consumerism and others are the predominant values operational in the society.

In this four square schema, the more the Weberian ethical standard is in operation in a society, the less the patron and client ethical standard (misconceived values) remain and vice versa. And the more the public interest overrides the private network interest in the way citizens think and act, the lesser the level of corrupt practices and misconceived values in that society and vice versa. Corruption is highly reduced when there is a convergence between Weberian ethical standards and public interest in the ways citizens think and act. It is fairly reduced when the convergence is between public interest and patron and client network/ misconceived values. It is fairly high when the convergence is between Weberian ethical standards and private network interest. And high when the convergence is between private network interest and patron and client network/ misconceived values.

So, because of differences in the citizens of zone A, B, C and D, their civic competencies through education, public interest-driven (or otherwise, private network interest-driven), how they understand and internalize the Weberian ethical standard (or otherwise, misconceived values), and the measures of social sanctions employed by states corruption level moves from zone to zone, expanding outwardly in a spiral direction. The diagram above illustrates this, starting from zone A where it is small to zone B where it becomes big, to zone C where it becomes bigger and then to zone D where it expands and becomes biggest.

Based on this assumption, the four zones of the world according to the classification are discussed below:

Zone A represents situations that approximate the ideal type of Weberian bureaucracy, where there is a convergence between Weberian ethical standards and public interest in the ways citizens think and act. In this zone, Heilman and Ndumbaro (2002) noted that "the boundary between the public and private property is clearly defined and the norms governing them are highly internalized. And that, it represents an ideal type of civic competence where citizens know their rights and obligations" (p. 502). He argued that "citizens know what constitutes public property; they understand the link between their taxes and public property. They feel that they have a responsibility to discourage public officers from using their offices for private gain" (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 502). Also that, ''legal and social sanctions are effective, in large part because they operate in a supportive moral and political environment. Citizens in this zone have a variety of formal and informal means to controlling the behaviour of public officers'' (p.503). Socially ostracizing and shaming corrupt officers as well as legal methods like suing are the means employed by citizens. ''In this zone, societal groups are empowered to fight against the misuse of public office and resources. Values and institutions reinforce each other and enhance the ability of people to hold their leaders accountable'' (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 503). Examples of countries in this zone are Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the Netherlands, which were all in the top ten of Transparency International's Index for least corrupt countries for the year, 2000

(Lipset & Lenz, 2000 in Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002). In this zone, because the acceptable norms are highly internalized by citizens and misconceived values are not predominant in the society; corrupt practice incidences are highly reduced.

Zone B represents a convergence between public interest and patron and client network/ misconceived values. Here, ''there is the tendency for personal interests to dominate public interests, especially in the absence of institutional mechanisms to check or control this trend'' (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 504). In this zone, it is noted also that, "the boundary between public and private is clearly defined, and that citizens know the link between public and private resources. However, the institutionalization and enforcement of ethical standards are very low" (p. 504). Heilman and Ndumbaro (2002) assert that "even though corruption is a problem in zone B, the state can still accomplish its goals in terms of completing public works and providing services. For example, while contracts may be awarded through corrupt practices, the contractor is still expected to accomplish the task in a professional manner" (p. 505). This situation represents where institutional practices do not conform to societal ethical standards, where some of the societal values have been misconceived. That is, "there is a lack of institutional mechanisms to empower people to hold societal leaders accountable just as there is a lack of top-level political commitment to transforming popular values into state policy" (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 505). Examples of these countries would include the 'Asian tigers' of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, which were ranked 15th, 28th, and 48th on Transparency International's Index for the year, 2000. In some of the Asian countries, people have demonstrated against corrupt officials, including Presidents, who have been forced to resign by public pressure and taken to court for corruption while in office (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002).

Zone C consists of situations where there is a convergence between Weberian ethical standards and private network interest. Heilman and Ndumbaro (2002) noted that "in this zone, the boundary between public and private property is unstable and barely exists. For many citizens, there is no clear connection between their contribution to building up public sector resources and taxes. In other words, their sense of 'ownership' over public resources is not strong'' (p.506). And that, ''Personal interests or kinship and patronage networks (misconceived values) seek to challenge the Weberian model but are kept in check by an authoritarian state. Controlling corruption centres on the state giving harsh punishments to deter official graft'' (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 506). He argued that "under these conditions, corruption is minimized by a top-down approach of dispensing punishments rather than through higher levels of civic competence or internalized values and norms" (p.506). "Corruption of the type where the costs are directly pushed into an identifiable group, such as the case with the traffic police extorting money from motorists, could be controlled with a commitment to rule enforcement" (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 507). However, that, "abstract corruption where costs are pushed off into an ill-defined group like taxpayers, donors, or the state is less likely to be effectively dealt with" (p.507). He noted that "given such circumstances, when top officials lack the will to punish their subordinates, it will likely trigger high levels of corruption because officially stated standards of bureaucratic behaviour (acceptable social norms) do not reflect the underlying social norms, which are more tolerant of corruption'' (p.507). An example of a country in this situation is China (ranked 63rd

in Transparency International's Index 2000) which imposes harsh sentences up to the death penalty for corrupt practices related offences (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002).

Zone D represents a condition where the convergence is between private network interest and patron and client network/ misconceived values. In this zone, Heilman and Ndumbaro (2002) observed that "the separation between the public and private is fluid, unstable and perhaps non-existent. The level of citizen civic competence is low and the public often encourages, or at least accepts, corrupt behaviour because misconceived values are very prevalent in the society" (p. 508). Also that, ''corruption can take the form of outright pillage of state resources through such devices as paper contracts for which no services or goods are provided. Here, societal norms match state practice in that the boundary between public and private is intentionally blurred'' (p.508). ''Usually, the states in a zone D situation are thought of as weak and unable to provide public services or to effectively implement their policies. Patronage and kinship networks permeate weak states and appropriate the state's resources'' (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002, p. 508). They argued that "all forms of corruption, those that have a direct negative impact on an identifiable group as well as abstract corruption where costs are pushed off onto a diffused public, are encouraged by social and/or patronage networks" (p.508). They further argued that "the recommendation of World Bank to put more emphasis on creating a working legal system, effective anti-corruption institutions and building democratic governance to enforce accountability and transparency, is not enough to counter the social networks that support corruption''(p.508). The countries in this zone are at the bottom of Transparency International's Index for 2000 and come from the third world and former socialist bloc (Heilman & Ndumbaro 2002).

The Nigeria Case Study

In locating Nigeria in the foursquare model, the country is in a Zone D situation. This is because in Nigeria corrupt practices incidence is high and widespread, "the boundary between the public and private property's sphere is fluid, unstable and perhaps does not exist; and the norms governing public and private property are not known to a majority of citizens not to talk of being internalized". The level of citizen civic competence in terms of knowing their rights and responsibilities is very low. The majority of Nigerians do not know what constitutes public property or understand the links between their taxes and public property. As such, do not see it as a responsibility to discourage public officials from using their offices for private gain. Instead, they encourage or at least accept corrupt behaviours.

Corruption in Nigeria takes the form of outright pillage of state resources through such devices as paper contracts for which no services or goods are provided, direct stealing where state resources are carted away without accountability and lodge in local and foreign banks or hidden underground, in tanks in their compounds or in undeveloped plots. The states in a zone D ''are thought of as weak, unable to provide services or to effectively implement their policies''. This situation also applies to Nigeria scenario in that the state is weak, and is largely unable to provide public services such as good roads, houses, portable water, healthcare, electricity, and the likes. Nigeria is a country known for having the best policies or plans on paper but the implementation of the plans has over the years become a mirage. This is because, instead of the Weberian ethical standards/ acceptable social norms directing the

conducts or running of state's institutions, misconceived values are controlling the actions of the actors in public institutions.

"Patronage and rent-seeking politics and kinship networks permeate all aspects of governance and render it a weak state by appropriating state resources to private individuals". All forms of corruption, "embedded that have a direct negative impact on an identifiable group as well as abstract corruption where the cost is pushing off unto a diffuse public", are encouraged by societal and/or patronage networks in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, "there is the lack of an institutional mechanism to empower people to hold societal leaders accountable for any misbehaviour in office". There is no visible and genuine commitment on the part of government and their agencies to empower people to fight corruption in Nigeria apart from the efforts of civil society groups which in most times are always frustrated by government, law enforcement agencies and judiciary. Confidence in the police (and its other allied agencies, EFCC and ICPC) and the country judicial system is so low because those who have money have advantages both at the police stations and courts.

If the individual approach to corruption control by meting hard punishment to offenders is carried out to the latter without regards to whose ox is gored, where everyone is subjected to the same law irrespective of social status, sex, ethnicity, religion and political affiliation to serve as a deterrent to others, the country can move to Zone C. If leaders are made to be responsible by carrying out their task (carrying out public works and providing services) in a professional manner, with a combination of economic growth, poverty reduction, citizen education and a commitment on the part of top government official sincerity to allow Anti-corruption institutions to fight corruption; and citizens are empowered to hold leaders accountable and throw away irresponsible ones through their civic power, the country can move to Zone B.

In addition to the conditions and parts to Zone B, if the norms governing public and private property are highly internalized by Nigerians, their civic competence increased through adequate knowledge of their rights and obligations, the knowledge of the linkage between their taxes and public property is made clear through education, ''legal and social sanctions are made effective by providing a working supportive moral and political environment for citizens to operate and carry out their civic role without being intimidated and crushed by the powerful'', the country will attain a Zone A status.

Recommendations

The study, therefore, recommends as follows:

Corruption control should be carried out without regard to whose ox is gored in how it is prosecuted.
The school curriculum, especially Social Studies and Civics should be overhauled to improve the civic competencies of citizens, and
Rather than taking the legalistic approach to control corruption alone, there is the need to consciously transform social values (to make citizens unlearn misconceived values)

as well as social institutions that work as enabling environments for corruption to strive.

Conclusion

The model has demonstrated the linkage and association between social norms, misconceived values and corruption practices incident in Nigerian society. It has clearly examined and identified the features and characteristics of the four zones the world was delineated into. The examination entails what is upright and appropriate in some zones and what is lacking and expected in other zones. The paper also provides us with the clue that is needed by serious countries to move from a highly corrupt zone to a less corrupt one. The expectation is that serious governments and nations will adopt the model's recommendation to improve their society's corruption control and move to a less corrupt zone.

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